

STATE OF THE UNION.

SPEECH

OF

HON. GARNETT B. ADRAIN, OF NEW JERSEY,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JANUARY 15, 1861.

Mr. ADRAIN said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: It is now over seventy-four years since the Federal Constitution was adopted, and the Union of these States formed; and during all that period we have advanced with the greatest rapidity in population and extent of territory, in the arts and sciences, in commerce, agriculture, education, and in all the elements which constitute a nation's prosperity and glory. And yet, notwithstanding our rapid growth as a nation, unparalleled in the world's history, there is a restless and persistent effort on the part of some of the southern States and people to destroy the very cause of all these glorious results—the Union, the hallowed Union, purchased and cemented by the blood and treasure of the great patriots and statesmen who made and bequeathed it to us, their descendants, to preserve and defend. Can it be that they will succeed in their mad and unholy efforts? Are there not conservative, patriotic, and true men enough in the southern States to resist this dark and angry wave of disunion which threatens to dash against and destroy the freest and best Government in the world? Sir, I cannot and will not believe that the whole South is so infected with the dangerous spirit of disloyalty to the Federal Constitution and the Union, as to lead it to drag down the temple of American liberty, crushing the hopes and happiness of millions of freemen here, and all the fond and earnest aspirations after liberty of the down-trodden and oppressed of earth everywhere. No, no; never, never! Men of the South who love the Union, (and there are many such,) and regard it as a great political blessing—the source of all our national prosperity, and the palladium of our liberties—come forth, and say to the rash and dangerous spirits among you: “Misguided men, we will not permit you to bring upon us all the horrors of a bloody civil war, and involve the whole country in one common ruin!” Remember, men of the South, that your fathers and ours, in the days of American Independence, stood shoulder to shoulder in achieving one of the grandest victories in the world's history. It was your fathers and our fathers, by their joint and patriotic efforts, who established the Federal Constitution and gave us the Union; and will you, their descendants, now destroy forever the noble work of their great intellects, lofty patriotism, and undying devotion to the cause of human rights and of free Government? No, no. Be true to your brave and patriotic ancestry; cherish with undying love their sacred memories; recount their many and great services in liberty's cause; and

strive to maintain, in all its grand and beautiful proportions, the hallowed Union of our fathers—and may I not still say the hallowed Union of their sons?—now and forever.

But if the Union is to be dissolved, and men of the South are bent on doing such a mad and unholy act, let me say to you that it will not be done without a resolute and determined effort on the part of all true and patriotic men at the North, at least, to prevent it by every constitutional means. The men of the North intend to stand by the Union, and defend it to the last, while there is a hope for its preservation. In the North, the people have been educated to speak of and cherish the Union as the greatest political blessing ever conferred on any people; and they will defend it against all assailants, from any and every quarter, whenever that defense becomes necessary. But I pray God that no other defense may ever be necessary than an appeal to the sense of patriotism and love of country of those who would attack and destroy it. I pray God that the North and South may never become involved in fraternal strife, and brother's hand dyed in the blood of brother! May my eyes never witness such an unnatural and bloody warfare! Heaven forbid it! God, in His ever wise and protecting care, avert from us such an awful event, which sickens the heart and chills the blood even to contemplate! Oh, may the dark and angry clouds of disunion, now gathering and lowering over the southern horizon, be all dissipated before more sober reflection, truer sentiments of patriotism, and a higher regard for one common Federal Government—one vast and mighty Republic, the home of the free, and the asylum of the oppressed of every land!

And, sir, I cannot permit this occasion to pass by without an allusion to that distinguished son of the South, Alexander H. Stephens, of Georgia, who has raised his bold and eloquent voice to quiet the storm of popular frenzy, and to call back an impulsive and misguided people to a sense of reason and of patriotism, and to those obligations which they owe to the Federal Government, and to the whole country. The gifted, eloquent, and soul-inspiring orator and statesman, Stephens, in coming forth as he has done, amidst popular clamor and prejudice, in defense of the Union, and in boldly rebuking the voice of disunion, has added further and imperishable laurels to his already great name and character; and I much regret, and the whole nation may well regret, that his voice is not now heard, as in days past, on this floor in this most perilous crisis of our country's his-

tory, rebuking in the severest tones the spirit of disunion, and presenting in all their attractive colors the blessings and glory of one great, free, and united Government.

What, sir, has produced this excitement and alienation of feeling on the part of the South towards the North? Is it not owing to a fear on their part that the newly-elected President, Abraham Lincoln, will disturb the domestic institution of slavery in the southern States? Before, however, showing the utter groundlessness of this fear, permit me, in passing, to observe that southern men have, in a very great measure, contributed to his election. In the first place, through their threats of deserting Mr. Buchanan's administration, they drove him to forsake the great doctrine of popular sovereignty, and to exert the weight of his official position and Executive power to impose upon the people of a Territory a constitution utterly repugnant to their political feelings and sentiments, and not the embodiment of their true will. And this, we all know, at once led to a wide breach in the Democratic party, and inspired the Republican party with new hopes of making another vigorous and perhaps successful effort to obtain the reins of the national Government. And never did Mr. Buchanan, and never did southern men, make a greater mistake, as far as the success of the Democratic party and peace of the country were concerned, than when they endeavored to force through Congress, and fasten upon an unwilling and protesting people, the Lecompton constitution. And then again, extreme and ultra men of the South broke up the Charleston convention, by deserting the old Democratic doctrine of non-intervention by Congress with the question of slavery, and demanding a new principle—that it should directly intervene for its protection. From that moment it was apparent, to the least observant of the signs of the times, that the Democratic party was doomed to suffer certain defeat. If, sir, the principle of non-intervention had been honestly adhered to—and to which the whole Democracy was committed—and a candidate nominated at Charleston representing that principle, and cordially supported both south and north, this day, in my opinion, the Democratic party would have been triumphant, and the South with no occasion to send forth their infuriated threats to dissolve the Union because of a Republican victory. Sir, there would then have been no such victory. This Republican victory—and listen to the truth, ye men of the South, who have turned your backs upon the once lauded, but now despised, doctrine of popular sovereignty—is because of your folly and desertion of great political principles, upon which the Democratic party gloriously triumphed in 1856, and upon which it could again have gloriously triumphed in 1860. How can you, then, in the face of these naked truths, now turn round and claim a Republican victory as a justifiable cause for the dissolution of the Union, when you yourselves have contributed so much to the accomplishment of that victory?

But, sir, is there any real and immediate danger to the South and her domestic institution of slavery? It is true, Abraham Lincoln, a Republican, will assume the reins of Government on the 4th of March next. It is also true, that he regards slavery as a moral, social, and political evil; but in this he is not alone. There are hun-

dreds and thousands in the North and Northwest who fully agree with him in sentiment. And I am not far out of the way when I assert that even at the South a similar sentiment is entertained by many. Most certainly Mr. Lincoln has the right to regard slavery as an evil, as well as the great mass of southern men to regard it as a great blessing, and, if you please, as "the highest type of civilization." His merely holding, and publicly expressing, too, such an opinion, is a right of which no one has just cause to complain. It is one of the greatest and most invaluable privileges of our Government, that all men are at liberty freely to express their sentiments on all political subjects. This right is one of the chief glories of our Republic, which will last, I trust, as long as the Republic itself endures.

The only real danger to the South would be, whenever Mr. Lincoln should attempt, and be able if so disposed, to interfere with and disturb the domestic institution of slavery. But has he even such a disposition? This is the first important inquiry. I am not, sir, the exponent of Mr. Lincoln's political views, nor a member of the great Republican party which has elevated him to the highest office within the gift of the people. But, sir, I intend to do justice to Mr. Lincoln, although a political opponent, for the sake of truth, and to allay excitement and unnecessary apprehension, if possible, in endeavoring to show that his political sentiments are not as radical and dangerous as represented. He has publicly declared in his speeches, long before the thought ever flashed through his mind of becoming one day President of the United States: 1. That he is opposed to all interference with slavery in the States. 2. That he is opposed to the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, unless a majority of the people therein desire it abolished; and in the case of those who do not desire it, compensation should be made to them for the loss of their slaves. 3. That he would consent to the admission of more slave States into the Union. 4. That he is in favor of a fugitive slave law; but would have some objectionable features removed from the present one, without "lessening its efficiency." 5. That he is opposed to allowing negroes to vote, and even to "qualifying them to hold office;" and 6. That so long as the two races are in the same community, he is in "favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race." Now, sir, if these are his true and honest sentiments, he is not an Abolitionist, at least in its true signification—one who would abolish slavery and set the whole negro race at liberty. He is, judging him by these sentiments, a conservative man, from whom the South has nothing to fear.

But it may be asked, has he not also advanced other sentiments conflicting with these conservative views? Has he not given utterance to the doctrine of what is called "the irrepressible conflict," which has sent such terror and dismay to so many southern hearts? Has he not declared that a house divided against itself cannot stand; and that this country must become all one thing or the other—all slave or all free? Well, admit all this for the sake of the argument, and that he is a full believer in the conflict between the two systems of slave and free labor: but what of that? After all, these are but mere individual opinions; and if never car-

ried out into any law, what injury can they do the South? The real question to be asked and answered is, what can Mr. Lincoln do on entering upon his high and responsible duties as President to deny to the South her just constitutional rights? In reply to that question, sir, there can be but one answer; and that is, nothing whatever. As this is a Government of law, and acts by law. I pray you, what law can Mr. Lincoln have enacted, even if so disposed, to interfere with and disturb a single southern right? Why, sir, will not the Senate be opposed to him, as well as the next House of Representatives? Will he not be utterly powerless to do mischief, even if he should intend any? Why, sir, he will not be able even to form his own Cabinet, and start the Government, without the consent and approval of a Democratic Senate. Here is a check upon him at the very outset; so that he will come into office without the power, even if so disposed, to strike a single blow at the domestic institution of slavery, which the people of the South are determined to cherish and defend at all extremities.

What, then, is the true and patriotic course for the South to pursue? Is it to rush madly out of the Union, and then into a bloody civil war, with all its indescribable horrors? Is that the kind of remedy for evils which they do not really suffer, but only imagine may happen? Is it not wiser and safer and happier to remain in the Union and bear with anticipated evils, than rush headlong into those which will most surely prove to be both real and dreadful? Within the Union is the place to demand and maintain your just rights. In it you are safe, prosperous, and free. Go out of it, and what security will you have, even for your slave property, which now occasions all your anxieties and fears? For this you will have no protection. Establish a southern confederacy to-morrow; and with a northern republic alongside of you without slavery, and which would not tolerate its existence within its borders, you will then see how long you will be able to hold your slaves in bondage. I shudder to think of the bloody insurrections and horrid massacres and devastated fields which would soon follow as the bitter fruits of your madness and folly.

The Federal Constitution is the supreme law of the land; and in conformity with it, Mr. Lincoln has been elected our next President. His simple election cannot be a ground for a dissolution of this Government, when the election is strictly in conformity with the laws of the land. If the Federal Constitution is to be respected and obeyed at all, it is the duty of all, both South and North, to submit to the clear expression of the popular will through the ballot-box. It is true, his political sentiments are obnoxious to the great mass of southern men, and so they are to great numbers in the northern States. But remember, Mr. Lincoln is only elected President for a limited and short period of time, which will soon pass away with all the excitement and danger which his election seems to have occasioned. The wise and great men who made the Federal Constitution limited the term of office of President to the short period of four years, with the express view that the people might soon remedy any mistake they had made in the choice of a Chief Magistrate by the election of another, who

might prove more acceptable to them. If Mr. Lincoln, then, should manifest a want of devotion to the Federal Constitution, and to the just rights of all sections of the land, the remedy is prescribed in the Constitution itself; and the people will soon be able to apply it. I say, then, let Mr. Lincoln enter upon the duties of his high office; and let him be judged only by his administrative acts. He has done nothing yet to interfere with the rights of the South. If he is, as some contend, a full believer in the irrepressible-conflict doctrine, he may yet perhaps change his views on this subject, or at least deem it most prudent not to advance or attempt to carry them into effect while President of the United States. There may be a very wide difference in the sentiments and acts of a mere political partisan and one called upon to preside over and direct the destinies of a great and free people. It will be (for who can doubt it?) the great desire and aim of Mr. Lincoln to promote the highest interests, happiness, and perpetuity of the country. It cannot be that he would prove even so blind to his own reputation, if actuated by no higher consideration, as to pursue any course likely to lead to the injury of the southern States, and a dismemberment of this Government. Is it not, then, time enough for southern men to take their stand, and proclaim their doctrine of secession, when Mr. Lincoln, as President, actually attempts to interfere with their peculiar institution of slavery, and to violate the Federal Constitution? Whenever he should do that, depend upon it, men of the South, you will not be the only ones in the country who would resist his unhallowed efforts, and uphold the Constitution, the faithful observance of which, in all its provisions and guarantees, constitutes our only safety, happiness, and liberty as a people. It is as much the interest of the people of the North to respect and obey that sacred instrument as of the people of the South. They cannot tell when, perhaps, it might be perverted to their own injury; and hence it is the true interest of us all, both North and South, East and West, to maintain inviolate the Federal Constitution in all its parts.

It may be said, "Are you not aware, sir, that in the North the Federal Constitution is already violated in the passage of acts by northern Legislatures obstructing and nullifying the fugitive slave law?" Yes, sir, I am aware of all this, and not only regret, but strongly condemn it. But might I not retort, if so disposed, by asserting that the laws of the country prohibiting the African slave trade are openly violated at the South, and that hundreds of poor Africans, torn from their native homes, and all that was dear to them there, are now in bondage on southern plantations? But I have no desire to dwell upon this constant infraction of the humane laws of the land. The violation of law at the South is no justification of its violation on the part of any of the northern States or people; and whenever it is done, it behooves all men, both North and South, who desire to live under a Government of law, to denounce and prohibit it.

There can be no question that Congress has full power to enact a fugitive slave law, in order to give practical effect to a very plain provision of the Federal Constitution. Whether the present law is what it should be in all respects, is a disputed question. It is objectionable to very many

on the ground of its not providing for a trial by jury in the case of a master demanding the return of his fugitive slave. But whether right or wrong, a good law or a bad one, it is the law of the land, and ought to be obeyed. And no State has a right to nullify its provisions and obstruct their faithful execution. And wherever this has been done in any of the northern States, it cannot be too strongly condemned; and the people of the North ought not to suffer their prejudices to lead them to enact laws which are directly in the face of the Federal Constitution. It is not only in violation of that Constitution, but of the plighted faith between the North and the South. And besides, if the law of the land can be violated in one instance, it can be done in another. And then, who does not know that men will soon come to regard a law as constitutional or not, very much as they are affected by their local interests and prejudices? There is but one safe rule for a law-abiding people to follow; and that is, entire submission to the laws of the land until they are modified or repealed. It cannot, and never will, be the case, that all the people will approve of every law of Congress. And hence, if they are permitted to set up their individual opinions, and oftentimes nothing but mere prejudices, as the rule of their action, it would not be long before there would be no law, but anarchy, bloodshed, and the downfall of our Republic. And while I condemn all violation of law and efforts at the South to carry on and reopen the African slave trade, I no less strongly condemn every act and movement of men and States at the North to nullify and set at naught one of the most necessary laws of the land for the preservation of the peace and perpetuity of the Union.

However much, sir, some of the northern States have gone astray in unwisely passing laws which obstruct and nullify the due execution of the fugitive slave law, I am happy and proud to say that New Jersey, my own State, has not followed their bad and prejudicial example. Although a majority of her citizens are opposed to the existence of slave labor on their own sacred and blood-dyed soil, yet they have not been unmindful to observe all the requirements of the Federal Constitution, and what is due to the full protection and enjoyment of southern rights under that sacred instrument. In that instrument a provision was inserted providing for the return of the fugitive slave to his master; and had it not been, the Federal Constitution would never have been adopted. If there had been no such provision, there would have been no protection to the master of his slave property. New Jersey, then, ever obedient to the requirements of that Constitution, having been among the first to ratify and adopt it as the supreme law of the land, has never sullied her patriotic and fair name by the enactment of what are called personal liberty bills, or any other bills which conflict with and obstruct its provisions. There may be some objections among her people to the present fugitive slave law; but all, Republicans and all, I fully believe, are in favor of its enforcement. And, sir, I cannot but here allude to one of the most able and distinguished sons of New Jersey, and one of the best representatives of Republican sentiment in that State, who, during the last presidential contest, maintained in his public speeches the constitutionality of a fugitive slave law, although he entertains some objections

to the present one. I allude, sir, to Hon. William L. Dayton, who is prominently spoken of in connection with Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet, whose talents, constitutional learning, integrity of purpose, devotion to the Union, urbanity and dignity of manner, would, in my opinion, not only grace, but give great strength and character to that Cabinet.

Not only, sir, has New Jersey not tarnished her fair name and records with nullifying laws, but she has adopted a fugitive slave law of her own, which is full and complete in all of its provisions, for the faithful return of the slave on demand and due proof of ownership. It is unnecessary here to recite those provisions; but they are all any slaveholder could desire for the protection of his property. But, sir, she has gone still further to manifest a kind and fraternal feeling towards her sister States of the South, in providing for any person, not an inhabitant of her State, who shall be traveling to or from, or passing through it, or coming into it, from any other of the United States, and having a temporary residence therein, to bring with him or her any slave or servant; and on removal or leaving the State, to take such slave or servant out of it; the number, however, of such slaves or servants not to exceed the usual number of personal or household slaves or servants which may be kept and maintained by such traveler or temporary resident.

After such an exhibition of fidelity to the Federal Constitution, and of fraternal feeling towards the South on the part of New Jersey, it ought, at least, to satisfy the most infuriated disunionist that the whole North is not abolitionized, as he most unjustly supposes, before he strikes a deadly blow at the Government, disrupting every tie which binds it together.

But it is demanded that the northern States which have adopted these personal liberty bills should at once repeal them, as a condition of the South remaining in the Union. Now, I wish with all my heart that these laws were repealed, on the ground of justice to the South, and obedience to the Federal Constitution; but whether they will be repealed or not is yet to be seen. In my opinion, they will be. Already steps have been taken in some of the northern States for that purpose. Let the South proceed and make their appeal to northern men, and show the injustice and unconstitutionality of these laws, and they may in this way be able to create a reaction in public opinion, and effect their object. There is a sense of justice and of right in the northern breast which may be strongly appealed to; and through it is a more likely way for the South to effect their object than by any threats and efforts to dissolve the Union. The mass of the people at the North, no matter to what political party they belong, intend to do right, and will do right, if the clear way is only pointed out to them by calm reason and convincing argument. But they are no more to be driven and frightened than the men of the South. What they do will depend on sober reflection and an honest conviction of right, duty, and justice.

However objectionable these personal liberty bills may be, yet, in fact, what great injury or loss have they occasioned to the South? Has not the fugitive slave law, as a general thing, been faithfully carried out? Are not the fugitive slaves, except in a few instances, on demand and satis-

factory proof, delivered up to their masters? And suppose a few have escaped: is their number or value of sufficient consequence to outweigh the blessings and worth of the Union, and a sufficient cause for its dissolution?

But what fear is there, as far as Mr. Lincoln is concerned, that the fugitive slave law will not be fully observed. In the first place, he has declared in favor of such a law; and secondly, he will be sworn to see the laws of the Government faithfully executed; and if he does not, he will prove false to his oath of office. May we not, then, safely take it for granted, both from his declarations and the oath of office he will be called upon to assume, that the fugitive slave law will be safe in his hands, and that all the fears of the South in this respect are wholly groundless.

Another ground of apprehension on the part of southern men is, that they will be deprived of what they conceive to be their just rights in the common Territories of the Government. It is maintained that southern men have an equal right with those of the North to go into the Territories and take with them their slave property. Now it is all true that the Territories are open and common to all, from the North and South, East and West; and I should like to know into what Territory the slaveholder is now prevented by any law of Congress from taking his slave property. None, sir; none. Nor will there be any such law enacted under the administration of Mr. Lincoln. The Senate and next House of Representatives will be against the passage of any such law; and there is the Supreme Court of the United States to pronounce it, if passed, to be unconstitutional, as it has already done. It is the height of folly and madness, then, for southern men to be rushing out of the Union, and turning their backs upon the Government, and bidding it defiance, before they are actually deprived of any of what they consider, their constitutional rights.

This question of congressional prohibition is now, I think, at an end. I do not believe that the Republican party will press it, or make any effort to have it established as the law of our Government; for the reason that they must see the utter impossibility of effecting their object without a destruction of that Government. It is not for me to dictate to that party what course to pursue in the present critical and dangerous condition of the country; but I know what I would do if a member of that party. It would be to fall back upon some fair and constitutional method, by which the disturbing question of slavery in the Territories might be settled and put to rest forever. Is it not high time, for the preservation of the peace and perpetuity of the Union, that this was done? This question has long been the chief cause of sectional agitation, and of arraying the South against the North, until the country now stands on the very brink of ruin; and as long as we have two great sectional parties—the one demanding the protection of slavery in the Territories, and the other its prohibition—there will be constant strife, vehement declamation, and wild threats of disunion—disturbing the peace and endangering the stability of our Republic. Let us now arrest this great and dangerous evil; and if once this question of slavery in the Territories is permanently settled, our country will bound on with renewed energy, and with giant strides, to

still further and grander heights of greatness and glory. And now, that the great leader of the Republican party has spoken in such sweet strains of conciliation and peace, why should those who have long admired and followed him hesitate to imitate his patriotic example. Mr. SEWARD, in his recent speech in the Senate—no less marked for its great elegance of style and oratorical power, than for its kind and conciliatory character—sank the partisan in the patriot and statesman, when he uttered these patriotic and Union-loving words:

“Beyond a doubt, union is vitally important to the Republican citizens of the United States; but it is just as important to the whole people. Republicanism and Union are, therefore, not convertible terms. Republicanism is subordinate to Union, as everything else is and ought to be—Republicanism, Democracy, every other political name and thing; all are subordinate—and they ought to disappear in the presence of the great question of Union.”

Let them, then, disappear; and with fraternal affection, and with eyes fastened upon that bright constellation which has so long been our pride and glory, let us swear on the altar of our common country not to permit one star to go down into endless night. I do not yet despair of the Republic, but still see a ray of light through the dark and angry cloud which overhangs us, to encourage our hearts, and lead us to expect the full sunshine of joy; and peace, and happiness, to break once more upon our broad and beloved land. I should prefer, sir, that the doctrine of non-intervention by Congress with the question of slavery in the Territories, should be made the basis of our sectional differences; thereby leaving the people to determine that question for themselves, like any other of their domestic institutions. I have long maintained this doctrine, as it is founded on the great principle of all popular Governments—the will of the people; but in a spirit of concession and compromise, I am ready to sustain and vote for other propositions which have been submitted. It is not my intention now to discuss any of these propositions; and I would simply signify my readiness to support the proposition of Senator RICE, with some modification, to divide the Territories into two great States, to be called Washington and Jefferson; or the proposition introduced by the gentleman from Tennessee, [Mr. ETHERIDGE,] to extend the Missouri compromise line; and some others which I might name, but which is unnecessary at the present time.

I am, sir, as you will perceive, for concession and compromise; and in expressing this sentiment, I am but reflecting the views and wishes of a great majority of the people of New Jersey, whom I in part represent. I would not be a true and faithful Representative of that small but gallant State, if I was unwilling to yield to some fair and honorable measure of adjustment for the preservation of the Union. It is my high honor to represent a people who are devotedly attached to the Federal Constitution and the Union; and they intend to preserve and defend both. New Jersey was the third State, in point of time, to ratify and adopt that Constitution as the supreme law of the land; and her many proud battle-fields are rich with the blood of her heroic sons, freely shed in the cause of American liberty. There is no State more strongly attached to the Union; and, as one of her Representatives, it is my determination to cling fast to it and preserve it, if in my power, by every fair, honorable, and patriotic

effort. And I most fervently pray God that some peaceable settlement of our sectional differences may be adopted, which will be satisfactory to the North and South, East and West, and which will bind the people of the several States together in fraternal and everlasting peace and friendship, under one common Federal Government, and under one common and glorious flag.

"Tis the star-spangled banner; oh, long may it wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave."

The spirit of concession, Mr. Chairman, is a generous and manly spirit. It requires, too, much more real moral courage to display it than to adhere persistently and doggedly to one's own opinion and a particular line of policy. It was this high-souled and magnanimous spirit which animated the breasts of the fathers of the Republic, and which brought into existence the Federal Constitution and our glorious Union. Washington, the president of the convention which formed that Constitution, in a letter dated September 17, 1787, in submitting to the old Congress that sacred instrument, used the following language, which I would most earnestly commend to the attentive consideration of every member of this House:

"In all our deliberations on this subject, we kept steadily in our view that which appears to us the greatest interest of every true American, the consolidation of the Union, in which is involved our prosperity, felicity, safety, perhaps our national existence. This important consideration, seriously and deeply impressed on our minds, led each State in the convention to be less rigid on points of inferior magnitude than might have been otherwise expected; and thus the Constitution which we now present, is the result of a spirit of amity and of that mutual deference and concession which the peculiarity of our political situation rendered indispensable."

Sir, if Washington, and Madison, and Hamilton, and those other great patriots and statesmen of that day, could exercise a spirit of mutual deference and concession to obtain that great end—the consolidation of the Union—why may not we also manifest a like spirit for the preservation of that Union? If our fathers, and such fathers, could do it, we need not hesitate long to imitate their noble example of patriotism and love of country. What they did was for us, their descendants, that we might enjoy the priceless blessings of a free and united Government; and let us so act as to hand down these blessings to our children.

"The greatest glory of a free-born people,
Is to transmit that freedom to their children."

But, sir, what is the remedy proposed for the anticipated wrongs of the South? It is secession—peaceable secession, as it is called—but in fact, rebellion. Now this idea of a State going out of the Union just when she pleases, and upon whatever cause she pleases, and without any cause at all, is so contrary to all just notions of the character of our form of government, that it cannot and must not be tolerated. Why, sir, acknowledge the right of each State to do this, and where is our boasted Union. It is nothing but a rope of sand, of no strength whatever to hold the States together, and which may be broken at any moment at the mere caprice, prejudice, and folly of the people. All that a State would then have to do, on the passage of any law of Congress distasteful to her, or the election of a President of whom she disapproves, or upon a mere whim, would be to proclaim herself out of the Union, and throw herself back upon

her offended dignity, and what she calls her reserved and sovereign rights. This whole theory of a peaceable secession is utterly fallacious, and was never dreamed of by the men who formed the Federal Constitution and established our form of government. If it had been the intention of the framers of that Constitution to give to any State this right of secession, a provision to that effect would doubtless have been inserted in it. But, no; the authors of that sacred instrument were endeavoring to form a Union not to be broken, but one that would be permanent, enduring for ages, and forever. Why, sir, the very first words of the preamble to the Constitution which greet our vision go to show that its establishment was for the purpose of forming "a more perfect Union." Yes, "a more perfect Union." These are the very words of the Constitution itself. And yet we are to be told that, under that instrument, the work of great patriots and statesmen, and made chiefly to bind the States in one strong and enduring bond, any one State, or more, may peaceably, with or without cause, withdraw from the Union, and destroy the national Government. If such a doctrine is true, then, the Federal Constitution is a failure, and our Government is a failure, and the men who framed them both have utterly failed in accomplishing what they most certainly intended, and so declared, "a more perfect Union."

This idea of secession, however, is nothing new in the history of the country. It was started years ago, by one of the leading and most gifted men of the South—John C. Calhoun, of South Carolina. And ever since his day there has been lurking about in that State the dark and treasonable design of disunion. South Carolina has been restless for years, and nothing, it seems, will satisfy her but to go out of the Union, and drag down the national Government, in the language of one of her talented but impulsive sons, "from turret to foundation stone." And yet this day South Carolina is suffering from no oppression, or any actual wrong at the hands of the Federal Government. The domestic institution of slavery is safe within her borders; and she has no just cause to complain of the non-execution of the fugitive slave law, as none of her slaves, or very few, at least, ever run away or escape. This idea of secession is claimed on the ground that the Federal Constitution is a compact between sovereign States, and that, each State being sovereign, a withdrawal from the Union is but an exercise of their sovereignty. But, sir, I deny that the Constitution was an act of the States, or State Legislatures, or emanated from them at all. It was the act of the people, and of the whole people, and they alone established it. In the language of the preamble of the Constitution, "We, the people of the United States, in order," &c., "do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." It was the work of the people themselves, and a compact and agreement between them, and not the States. And hence the people alone have a right to modify and change the Constitution and their form of government.

It is not true in fact, however, as contended, that the States are wholly sovereign and independent. In becoming parts of one great national Government, they parted with certain attributes of sovereignty to that Government, for the com-

mon good of all the States. No State has a right to make treaties, declare war, levy taxes, &c. All these acts of sovereign power can alone be exercised by the General Government. And besides, the citizens of each State owe allegiance to the Federal Government, and are bound to obey the Federal Constitution, and all laws passed by Congress in conformity with it. In fact, if any State should make a law contrary to that Constitution, her citizens owe obedience to that instrument first, as the supreme law, in preference to the law of their own State, which they may utterly disregard. It is idle, then, to maintain for a State complete sovereign power, as if the States were masters of the Federal Government, and could destroy it at pleasure. Said the great Webster, on a great and memorable occasion, in the other branch of Congress:

"This Government, sir, is the independent offspring of the popular will. Nay, more, if the whole truth must be told, the people brought it into existence, established it, and have hitherto supported it, for this very purpose, among others, of imposing certain salutary restraints on State sovereignties. The States cannot make war; they cannot contract alliances; they cannot make each for itself separate regulations of commerce; they cannot lay imposts; they cannot coin money."

The right of revolution is altogether another and different thing from the right of a peaceable secession, which is claimed as entirely consistent with the Federal Constitution and our form of national Government. If those southern States which desire to go out of the Union, and break up the Government, base their action on the inherent right of revolution in the people to change and overthrow the Government under which they live, in case of intolerable wrong and oppression, no one can dispute this right. But they do not claim this revolutionary right; nor is there any such intolerable wrong and oppression. This right of a State or people thereof to absolve themselves from all allegiance to the Federal Government, without the consent of the rest cannot be admitted. It was long ago disputed and utterly exploded in a most masterly argument, the nullification proclamation of Andrew Jackson, who was called, as President, to exert his great talents, patriotism, and firmness, in then crushing the hydra-headed monster disunion. In his bold and determined language:

"The right of the people of a single State to absolve themselves at will, and without the consent of the other States, from their most solemn obligations, and hazard the liberties and happiness of the millions comprising this Union, cannot be acknowledged. Such authority is believed to be utterly repugnant both to the principles upon which the General Government is constituted, and to the objects which it is expressly formed to attain."

But, sir, in case a State does secede, and declare herself out of the Union, as has already been done, what then? Is she to be coerced back into the Union, or permitted to depart in peace, and set up for herself as an independent and sovereign Power? If by coercion is meant a declaration of war against her, then I am not for that; but if it means the faithful execution of the laws of the Federal Government, then I am for their execution. But it may be asked, how are you going to execute your laws in a seceding State where the people have abolished all the Federal courts, and dispensed with all Federal judges and officers to carry out the laws? There, for instance, is South Carolina. How are you to execute the

laws of the Federal Government in that State, where there are no United States courts, and no United States district attorneys or marshals? In her case, I would reply as follows: if she does not desire within her borders such courts or such officers for the administration of justice, be it so. The inconveniences of such a course only fall upon her own people. If she does not desire, either, the benefits of the United States mail, be it so; and let her people be at the expense and trouble of making their own postal arrangements. And if she also desires to be without United States Senators and Representatives on this floor, be it so. The Federal Government will still move on, notwithstanding their absence.

But there are certain laws which the Government must carry out, and these appertain to the collection of the revenue. The collection of the revenue of this Government cannot be interfered with by the people of South Carolina without resistance. That revenue can be collected at the harbor of Charleston, under the flag of the United States floating at the mast-head of our ships-of-war, and from the parapet of that impregnable fortress, Sumter, now in charge of that brave and gallant soldier, Anderson, whose military genius and devotion to the rights and honor of his country have covered his name with imperishable glory. And, sir, I am happy to have it in my power to commend the President for resisting the strong appeals made to him to withdraw that bold and faithful officer from the only safe and sure position where the rights and property of the Government can be effectually protected. Let the President only remain firm, now that he has assumed a bold and patriotic position on the side of the Constitution and Union. It is unfortunate that he had not done so at an earlier day, and placed all the forts at Charleston and along the southern coast in such a complete state of defense as would have dissipated all idea of their capture. If he had only taken this precautionary step, in my opinion, the onward march of disunion would have been arrested, and the passions of southern men given way to sober reflection and to a real sense of their mad and dangerous undertaking. But even at this late hour, I hail with grateful emotions his patriotic determination to execute the laws and maintain the rights and dignity of the Federal Government. And in this determination he will be fully and cordially sustained by the American people everywhere who love their country, and intend to uphold and defend a Government which, if once destroyed, can never, never be replaced.

I am, sir, for peace; and will sustain any fair and honorable measure to preserve it, as I have already intimated, between the North and South. In this perilous crisis, it is my intention to rise above mere party, and act for my country, my whole country, and nothing but my country. No man is more opposed to a war than I am—a war, too, between brothers. I could enter with my whole heart, and with alacrity, into a contest with any foreign Power which invaded our rights, and insulted our flag. But to go into a deadly contest with those of my own land is enough to sicken and chill the heart, and renders the very thought of war indescribably horrible. And yet the laws of the land must be sustained and enforced. The President has sworn to sup-

port the Constitution of the United States, and so have we. The people of this country expect us to do it with strict fidelity, at all and every hazard. The faithful observance of the Constitution and execution of the laws is no war. It is no just cause for a war, although a war might result from it. But if it should arise from any such cause, who will bring it upon us? Those States and people which violate all plighted faith in coming into the Union, and now go out of it, setting the Constitution and laws at open defiance, and boldly seizing upon the property of the Federal Government:

The faithful execution of the laws is not only necessary for the protection of the rights and property of the Government; but for the very existence of the Government itself. And if there is not sufficient power in this Government to enforce its own laws, protect its own property, and resist open rebellion to its lawful authority, it is high time the American people should know and understand the weakness of their Government. If this is the case, such a Government is not worth living under or preserving; and I am for another, of more strength, and which has the power to execute its laws, protect its property, and preserve its own dignity and character. But, in my opinion, our Government is good enough, and strong enough. All that is requisite is, that the men who are placed at its head should be faithful to their high trust, and be vigilant sentinels on the watch-tower of American liberty. "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance." Our liberty was won by the blood and treasure of patriots and heroes, and it can only be preserved by constant and unceasing care, and by a resolute determination to resist every effort to undermine and overthrow it.

The men, sir, who would dare to dissolve the Union, and overthrow the freest and best Government on earth, would be guilty of a great political crime. I can conceive of nothing more horrible than to be the authors of such an act. It would not only entail upon us all the horrors of civil war, and be the downfall of all popular government, but would crush out forever all the noble efforts of patriots throughout the world to give political freedom to the oppressed and downtrodden by high-handed tyranny. Oh, what a sad spectacle it would be for patriots and lovers of freedom to behold! The tyrants and despots of the Old World would rejoice, and sing paeans to the downfall of liberty here; while the toiling bondmen of European despotisms would weep, as all hope of political ransom dies out forever in their breasts. It is our example of Republican liberty that has fired many a patriot heart, and nerved many a bold arm to strike the blow in freedom's cause. And without citing other marked instances, had it not been for our example, who supposes that we would have witnessed the heroic achievements of one of the greatest generals of the age—Garibaldi—to relieve his countrymen from cruel oppression, and clothe them with the rights and blessings of freedom? Cease, then, ye men of the South, all these unholy efforts to dissolve the Union. Let your excited passions subside, and come once more to regard the people of the North as not all Abolitionists, who would destroy your

cherished institutions. It is true, there are Abolitionists at the North; but very few in number, and utterly powerless to do you any serious injury. There are but few Wendell Phillipses, Gerrit Smiths, and William Lloyd Garrisons among us. Do not regard their rant, wild declamation, and vehement invective, as the true expression of northern sentiment. My honest judgment is, that the great mass of northern men have no disposition to deny to you any of your just constitutional rights. Soon the period will be here when you will see what the Republican party will do, which you so much dread, and which you would make the occasion of the destruction of the Government. Had you not better remain awhile before going out of the Union? and perhaps, after all, Mr. Lincoln may dissipate all your fears, and give you no occasion for taking the fatal step which some of you contemplate.

In conclusion, sir, it should be the earnest and patriotic effort of all men, both North and South, to restore, if possible, that cordial and fraternal feeling which once existed between them. All should endeavor to live up to, and faithfully carry out, all the provisions and guarantees of the Federal Constitution. That Constitution is the supreme law of the land, overriding all other law which conflicts with it. It must be submitted to and observed in all its parts, or else there is an end of our Federal Government. It is only by submission to law that peace, good order, and Government itself, can exist. In the despotisms of the Old World, the sword and the bayonet govern and hold the people in check; but here it is their own free will, embodied in the laws of the country which they themselves have made. And may that will ever be on the side of the Federal Constitution and the laws of the land, and be ever ready to act for the good of the whole country! But above all, may the will of the people ever be on the side of the Union, as our fathers made it! In days that are past, this Union has been violently assailed and threatened with destruction; but in every instance with utter failure and discomfiture to those who did it. In every time of its danger, there have been good and patriotic men, both north and south, east and west, to rally to its defense, as the source of all our manifold blessings as a nation. Thus far our noble ship of State has outlived every violent tempest and dangerous shock; and I pray God she may yet outride the present boisterous gale. Let us not only pray for it, but work for it. There can be, and ought to be, but one ardent wish and strong determined will, in every patriotic heart, to preserve a Union which has cost so much; around which cluster so many precious memories: and which is the true source of all our nation's prosperity and glory. In the language of Andrew Jackson, whose life and services as a soldier and statesman afford the best evidence of his strong love of the Union: "The Federal Union: it must be preserved." And in that other language, embodying the same great patriotic thought of another great man, Daniel Webster, whose love for and devotion to the Union were equally strong, "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable."